

Why is it important to build relationships with outside agencies? Describe some strategies you might use to build relationships with these agencies.

In a community, schools and educational centers are typically thought of as cornerstones of that particular community and/or setting. It is important for schools of all sizes, schools in rural and urban areas, and schools made up of diverse populations to build relationships with outside agencies and businesses. In addition to working closely with outside agencies and businesses, schools must also develop effective and positive relationships with members of the community in which it serves. According to Hoyle et.al. (1998), “good relations are not accident; they are planned” (pg. 42).

When seeking to develop a partnership with an outside agency, business, or community group it is important for the school and the administration to remain focused on the established educational goals of the school. Decisions to form partnerships must be relevant and supported by the vision, mission, and goals that the school has established. “Working collaboratively, the school, families, and community members can select effective involvement practices that are aligned with the school’s goals, then collectively identify expected results for students, teachers, and parents.” (Hackmann, Schmitt-Oliver, & Tracy 2002, pg. 132).

Another important factor that educational leaders must remain focused on is communication throughout the school and the community. Effective communication of the school’s needs, goals, and desired outcomes is critical to

developing and effective partnership with a community group or business.

According to Hackmann et.al. (2002), “frequent interaction and communication among the school, families, and community ensures that students will receive consistent messages throughout the community about the common values that schools promote for student success.”

Relating the discussion prompt to my current educational setting, an outside agency that a school can greatly benefit from developing a working relationship with is an educational service unit. At the educational service unit (ESU) or mission is to provide innovation, leadership, and service to our schools. Staff at the ESU provides numerous services to schools including but not limited to: student support services, special education services, professional development services, and media/technology services. An ESU is a valuable resource for schools and educational leaders must be educated on the variety of professional services that can be provided to the school, staff, and students through and ESU. In order to educate our schools we conduct administrator meetings for principals and superintendents. Also, many lines of communication are offered and sent to schools that express available services.

A second relationship that can be developed be educational leadership is with parent groups such as a parent-teacher organization (PTO) and other community businesses. “By forming closer alliances with parents and community, schools may become more effective in helping students feel a sense of belonging in the school setting” (Hackmann, Schmitt-Oliver, & Tracy 2002, pg. 131). Educational

leaders and schools can reach out to a PTO and other community businesses for support relating to established educational goals.

As instructional leaders and building managers, it is the task of the principal to ensure that any relationship that is established with any outside agency or group not only keeps the focus of the relationship on continuous educational improvement, on the needs to the students and teachers the school serves, but also the needs of the community organization in which the relationship is being developed.

References:

- Hackmann, D.G., Schmitt-Oliver, D.M., & Tracy, J.C. (2002). *The standards-based administrative internship*. Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, Inc.
- Hoyle, J.R., English, F.W., & Steffy, B.E. (1998). *Skills for successful 21st century school leaders: Standards for peak performers*. Arlington, VA: American Association of School Administrators.